

MINUTES LEESBURG PLANNING COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 16, 2004

The Leesburg Planning Commission met on Thursday, September 16, 2004, in the Council Chambers, 25 West Market Street, Leesburg, Virginia. Staff members present were David Fuller, Nick Colonna, Nancy Kitchens, Bruce Douglas and Linda DeFranco.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chairman Vaughan.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman Vaughan
Commissioner Bangert
Commissioner Barnes
Commissioner Hoovler
Commissioner Jones
Commissioner Kalriess
Mayor Umstattd
Commissioner Wright

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Hoovler moved to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion: Hoovler
Second: Bangert
Carried: 7-0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Wright moved that the minutes of the September 2, 2004 meeting be adopted as noted.

Motion: Wright
Second: Kalriess
Carried: 7-0

PREVIEW CASES

None

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

None

PETITIONERS

Ms. Ann L. Jones of 1232 Bradfield Dr., SW came forward to introduce Ann Jansen from the Keep South Leesburg Beautiful organization.

Ms. Ann Jansen of 105 Balch Springs Circle came forward to present the Planning Commission with a petition and 1,385 signatures regarding their opposition to the proposed Meadowbrook Development.

Chairman Vaughan thanked her and stated the he, as well as the Mayor who received the same petition at a previous Council meeting, were surprised at the volume of signatures.

There were no other petitioners.

PUBLIC HEARING

None

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

None

ZONING

None

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Mr. David Fuller, Chief of Comprehensive Planning, provided a brief introduction of the four chapters of the town plan that were presented to the Planning Commission. These include Demographics, David Fuller; Housing, Nancy Kitchens, Sr. Planner; Economic Development, Nick Colonna, Sr. Planner and Natural Resources, Bruce Douglas, Sr. Planner.

Commissioner Wright asked what the timing was for the remainder of the background reports. Mr. Fuller responded that the next four chapters, Parks & Recreation, Government Facilities and Services, Cultural Resources and History & Architecture/Urban Design will be ready for the November 18th meeting.

Mr. Fuller presented the Demographics portion of the town plan. It included information on population trends, age, educational attainment, racial and ethnic diversity, income and poverty level. The population is expected to double within the next 25 years. The age distribution was interesting with the majority of the population falling in the 35 to 64 age bracket. Lastly, there was information on the percentage of English speaking residents, Spanish speaking residents, Pacific Rim languages and Indo-European languages.

Commissioner Bangert asked if the population numbers reflect the current Leesburg boundaries, or if they include the Joint Land Management Area? Mr. Fuller responded that this was current boundary only. Ms. Bangert went on to ask if we were losing the 65 and over population through retirement out of the area. Mr. Fuller said that yes, there was probably some loss. He also noted that the table used percentages, not numbers. Commissioner Bangert said it would be important to verify the number of people leaving the area, and the reason for their departure. For future planning purposes, this would be important information to have.

Mayor Umstattd commented that the breakdown of the ethnic diversity was not as comprehensive as the age category. She asked if there was a breakdown of how many people under the age of 18 speak primarily Spanish, how many other languages, etc. Commissioner Bangert said this information should be available from the schools. Her reasoning on this is that the breakdown in the chart indicates that 5.4% of the population speaks Spanish at home, while over 20% in one class at a local school speak Spanish at home. The figures as presented could be misleading.

Commissioner Hoovler asked if the 2000 census information on income could reflect the 1990 to 2000 figures. Regarding the poverty level, the fact that there is a decrease is remarkable. What happened to make this decrease occur? Further background information on this would be helpful. Commissioner Bangert said specific numbers versus percentages would be much more helpful.

Commissioner Kalriess stated that 21% of homeowners are strapped economically (spend more than 30% on housing costs) to make their payments both in Leesburg and the county. Is this occurring only here, or in other areas of the country also? How does this relate to the rest of Northern Virginia, and what does this mean to us? Should this give us cause for concern and how would this affect future planning? Mr. Fuller responded that communities need to work toward a balanced community averaging out high pay versus low pay.

Chairman Vaughan pointed out that there were agencies that provide assistance, would there be an opportunity to address the existence of these groups and assist in the support of these programs? Commissioner Hoovler added that Habitat for Humanity could be a good source of the percentage of residents that are looking for affordable housing. Mayor Umstattd added that during the budget talks, several agencies requested assistance. Property taxes in the town make life less affordable here. Commissioner Bangert added that social services are being paid through county taxes. Recently funds were provided to Loudoun Cares to assist in centralizing social service agencies in one building.

Commissioner Jones asked why the population distribution category of 35-64 couldn't be broken down further, perhaps 35 – 55 and 55-65 in order to show the magnitude of those areas of the population that are about to shift into another category. This would show the shift in the baby boomer population. Also, can the affordability element by housing types be shown, e.g., townhouses vs. single family detached. The County has just reduced

density by 60% in their new zoning ordinance. This affects the value of property, types of homes being built and assessments. This directly controls the affordability to maintain a home. Creating a better housing balance by increasing number of townhouses and condominiums has helped.

Commissioner Wright agreed that the further breakdown of the age group is important. It would reflect the number of households entering the fixed income bracket.

Chairman Vaughan asked for an explanation of the difference between median household income, median family income and median per capita income. Mr. Fuller explained that per capita is per person, median family is a household of related people, and median household would include members living in one dwelling whether related or not.

Mayor Umstattd asked when the issue of affordability of housing comes up, would the assessed value/sales price and type of housing be more pertinent information than cost per square foot. Also, look at the figures in relation to average minimum wage and unit cost.

Nancy Kitchens, Sr. Planner, came forward to give the report on the Housing Chapter. The information is based on data from the 1997 town plan and the 1990 census for the first part of the chapter. During this time period there was a 10% vacancy rate, the median house value was twice the national average and the percentage of new housing rose by over 100% between 1980 and 1990. The 1997 Town Plan has one goal and eight objectives, basically to maintain a balanced community with a wide range of housing and employment opportunities.

One major citizen concern is without more non-residential growth to help offset taxes, the affordability of housing will still be out of reach. This was not addressed in the housing element of the 1997 Town Plan but should become an important factor in the land use element of the new plan. The Land Use section of the County Plan does encourage mixed use and provides suggestions for community design, both of which encourage reduction in vehicular traffic, increase in pedestrian traffic and inclusion of open space. The goal of the new Town Plan is to provide a diversified housing supply that supports a balanced community with a high quality of life and a strong fiscal condition.

Commissioner Jones addressed affordability. Years ago the Market Station project had a block grant with a small section of affordable housing. Is it possible to explore incentives for applying for funding? Ms. Kitchens said that yes, we can certainly look into this.

Commissioner Kalriess echoed Mr. Jones comments. In Arlington there is a proffer pot that allows for funds to be expended toward affordable units. Quality must also be considered. Cheap housing can result in quick blight. Diverse designs could be achieved through incentives. Walkability of neighborhoods is also a very important factor to consider.

Commission Hoovler asked about the percentage of substandard housing in 1990, what is the percentage today? Has it gone down? Ms. Kitchens said she would extract those figures for inclusion in the report.

Mayor Umstattd said the issue of affordability is complicated. Currently there are excessive numbers of people living in apartments and housing. Because there is no affordable housing, many people are living in overcrowded conditions all around town. The county's attempt to pass an ordinance still needs to be revamped to realistically curb occupancy in dwellings.

Commissioner Jones spoke about the influx of the labor force, not unique to Leesburg. Can any community deal with this? There is a need, but is it being met? Does the town also have to come up with legislation to assist in this problem.

Commissioner Bangert said the government does not belong inside the walls of people's homes, however, it has every right to dictate what happens outside of those walls, e.g. parking, excessive noise, high traffic, etc. Commissioner Jones responded that each dwelling has a capacity which then affects health issues, human services, etc.

Commissioner Bangert referred to a statement saying that the goal should be changed to housing rather than a balanced community. Other parts of the chapter that she would like to have elaboration on include adequate housing for the elderly, a more up to date chart on housing trends, housing type by until should compare Leesburg with Loudoun County, a balance between the comment "no more houses in Leesburg" to "more houses are needed, especially for the workforce". Is there a link to strong fiscal condition and diversified housing? The phrase needs to change to reflect that we are not in opposition to low income housing.

Commissioner Wright commented that when you look at the level of employment opportunities in Leesburg there is no affordable housing for them. Where do employees in Leesburg live? What is the total number of people employed in Leesburg? Most of the jobs are in retail. In affordability some people are paying more than 30% of their income for housing. Is there a study available that reflects those people that can currently afford their present home, but could they buy it at today's fair market value? What does each house cost the Town? Mr. Wright pointed out that Objective #6 should be modified to remove the word "intensive". Number 7 encourages housing as a component of mixed use providing a gateway into Leesburg. He feels that we need to be careful of what the percentage is. In other words one small office building and many houses does not make a balance.

Commissioner Barnes asked how low pricing has to be for the lowest income families to be able to afford housing?

Commissioner Bangert said that the reason we have so many houses that don't cost the town as much is because most of the services come from the county so the town is in essence making money.

David Fuller responded that in the 60/40 study indicated that houses bring in less revenue than cost. The largest cost is schooling which is a county cost. There would have to be a study that reflects county cost versus town cost.

Commissioner Jones commented that the county is broken into eastern urban versus rural western. Until a house costs more than \$375,000 it is a negative impact on county funds. The comparison is apples to oranges since there is urban vs. rural and public works departments versus non public works, etc. It would be difficult to obtain a valid result.

Mayor Umstattd mentioned that this statement regarding costs looked like it was a holdover from prior annexation studies.

Commissioner Wright remembered that a house in town needed to cost \$1 million to provide the breakeven point.

Commissioner Jones said that growth has appeared mostly around the urban perimeter of towns.

Chairman Vaughan said that the mixed use is an important part. Assuring that the non-residential portion gets built first, then the residential can be put in and controlled to attempt to balance the development out.

Commissioner Kalriess commented that this is not feasible for a developer since it costs too much to build commercial development versus the rents they can command. This is why there is so much residential development.

Nick Colonna, Sr. Planner, gave his presentation on economic development. This element of the 1997 Town Plan is broken into two sections, a description of the town's economy and the plan's goals, objectives and action program related to the economic development. The 1997 town plan fails to address tourism and regional issues related to the town, and it is important that this data be included in the new plan. Information on the major employer in Loudoun County indicates that the county government is the largest employer, followed by the hospital and then the county school system. The service industry is by far the largest segment of employment followed by retail. Both of these segments represent low incomes. Effort must be made to increase the number of higher paying jobs in order to provide a better balance. On the other hand, the town's largest segment of residents are employed in managerial/professional jobs; however, the majority of these residents work out of the town limits and out of the county.

Some of the findings include management of the economic development through maintenance of an educated workforce that will attract high wage employers. Those employers mostly seek locations where the employees can find housing nearby. The draft goal is to develop a diversified economy that builds upon the town's strengths and supports a balance community with a high quality of life and strong fiscal condition. Some objectives to help reach this goal are to support tourism development, support research and development offices that take advantage of technology oriented job

opportunities, support mixed use development and redevelopment opportunities and enhance the quality of life through affordable housing, educational and cultural opportunities, attractive and functional buildings and open space, and a healthy environment.

Chairman Vaughan asked about the education level of the county versus the town. When you address economic development and the 60/40 issue the most pressing need is to help shift the tax burden from a residential to a non-residential base. Mr. Colonna responded that things are being considered to bridge the gap.

Commissioner Jones addressed the 60/40 and felt the numbers presented some time ago did not reflect a necessarily negative impact. Should we be looking at just property taxes or should we be looking at the entire revenue picture. David Fuller responded that more input is needed and that there would be a joint meeting of the EDC, EAC and PC. Mr. Jones went on to say that it would be critical to include businesses lost over the time period reflected in the report.

Commissioner Kalriess made the comment that it is very difficult to find office space within the Town. Most of it is 10,000 s.f. or less. As we look to attract business, we need to address transportation, added taxation on top of county taxes, restaurants, etc. We need to attract businesses to town other than retail. In the plan, where we have transitional uses, what is the purpose of industrial zoning? Mr. Colonna responded that the challenge is that these areas are often rezoned. The purpose is to try and attract at least office space.

Commissioner Hoovler said there is much potential, looking at Reston and Herndon that are taking advantage of government office, and we have not been able to attract these types of businesses successfully.

Commissioner Bangert asked about the table on professional growth by industry type. Does this then have to tie into the transportation element as well? The question arose whether we receive the same tax dollars from educational institutions as other business. Commissioner Kalriess responded that this reflects property tax, then BPOL needs to be taken into consideration. Ms. Bangert said if the educational aspect brings in as much money, then we should try and draw more, if not perhaps we should focus on other businesses. Ms. Bangert went on to address some of the language in some of the objectives. She felt that the words “intensive” and “concentrated” should be deleted, that it could imply negative impacts to citizens. Lastly, she asked if we have a business attraction team in Leesburg. The answer was not for just Leesburg, we work through the county. Ms. Bangert asked that this be considered for Leesburg solely.

Commissioner Jones stated that there is an Economic Development Director and a Tourism Coordinator and soon to be Downtown Business Coordinator. This would seem to be the perfect area for this type of “team”.

Commissioner Wright referenced the town's economic development plan and the county's plans. He requested copies and went on to note the relevance of the 60/40 issue and these various concepts. He does not feel that we are at a reasonable number for 60/40. He stressed that we should not settle for a number simply because there is not much land left in inventory. Don't tie land use directly to this number, but investigate the workable number. Next Mr. Wright talked about the jobs that are coming to town with the high percentage of retail. They do not provide the salary that allows people to live here. We need to drive the market for attracting business, not wait for the market to drive the attraction to town. Doing an analysis about where people work and inquiring if satellite offices can be opened, etc. Mr. Wright mentioned a few objectives and how they could be expanded somewhat.

Commissioner Barnes commented on Commissioner Bangert's concern for persons near or over retirement age and keeping them here in the community. Perhaps there could be some tax incentive to allow this segment of the population to remain in the area. Mr. Barnes stressed that elderly people do not cause the direct cost to the county that a family with children does.

Commissioner Wright said that keeping them in the area brings an intangible value to the community.

Bruce Douglas, Senior Planner, added his comment to the 60/40 and economic development relating a story from his days in Fairfax. He pointed out that Fairfax wooed development of office buildings, that then stood vacant for years. They did not contribute to the tax base, nor did they contribute to the profit of the developer.

Next Mr. Douglas gave his presentation on the Natural Resources element of the Town Plan. While the Loudoun County plan has much merit for the emphasis on protection of stream corridors, conservation design for sensitive development and green infrastructure as a guide for land use decision making, the 1997 Town Plan does not provide an integrated approach to the town's environmental issues. The new plan needs to establish criteria to delineate a system of open space and indicate how much impact land use decisions will have on the environment. While Leesburg is experiencing a rapid loss of tree canopy, along with open space and poor air quality, the town must realize what will be regulated by the state and federal guidelines and what they can regulate. They need to establish preservation and restoration guidelines and seek compatibility with the Loudoun General Plan. The goal will be to protect the natural flora and fauna of the area, and most importantly to protect the residents from environmental hazards.

Commissioner Bangert mentioned that the old plan included the radon issue. Is this still something of concern? Mr. Douglas responded that there have never been any requests for radon proffers or conditions, and it is a problem that doesn't surface until after a home has been built. It has become an individual issue.

Commissioner Jones said that he was part of the 1997 Town Plan committee and back then there was a lot of concern about radon. Leesburg is in a geological area where this could be a problem.

Commissioner Bangert then addressed the outdoor lighting and noise portion of the report. She questioned whether these would be specifically addressed in the new town plan. Mr. Douglas responded that yes, it would be a part of the plan. Addressing highway noise at the onset of a development can help mitigate it. Ms. Bangert asked if the tree plan will be part of the Natural Resources portion of the plan or would it be a separate item. Mr. Douglas responded that other portions of the plan will address the trees along streets. With regard to ozone levels, Ms. Bangert asked if these numbers were specific to Leesburg, or were they part of regional readings? They are regional numbers.

Commissioner Hoovler addressed the tree plan and the watershed management plan, both of which are on different timelines as the town plan. Will they share the same objectives that are laid out in the town plan. Mr. Douglas said yes, they will. Some of the goals in the 1997 town plan were not met, e.g., addressing steep slopes. This doesn't mean they were unworthy, will they be readdressed in the new plan? Yes, they will be. Mr. Hoovler also addressed lighting and noise restrictions, particularly airport noise. Is there very much the town can do to limit airport noise? Mr. Douglas responded that basically how the land surrounding the airport is used. Basically, making sure there is public awareness is important. Mr. Hoovler commented that restoring and preserving the tree canopy is important.

Commissioner Kalriess addressed the by right use in vested properties. He would like to see encouragement of developers to improve old concept plans. What was submitted years ago, should be readdressed to improve it to today's standards. Give some thought in the plan to encourage meeting LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards. Lighting standards should include the height reduction of poles and the different lighting types. Currently there is a haphazard standard for lighting and this should be standardized. Cluster housing should also be readdressed, and he feels that educating the residents about this could help encourage its use.

Commissioner Jones asked if the watershed could be put in as a baseline for the environmental planning portion of the plan. He asked if there were funds appropriated for the Crescent District, and if so, will Mr. Douglas participate in the process? Many projects are on the books right now, while the comp plan is being written. Can the town plan be coordinated to incorporate the proposed plans in the town plan. He also addressed cluster housing. Commissioner Wright said that clustering is currently out of the ordinance, but is being rewritten to comply with the State Code. Mr. Jones stated that clustering is a good tool for preservation of open space.

Commissioner Wright echoed Commissioner Kalriess' comments on improving by right uses on vested properties. He also asked if there is a lighting standard in existence that we can study? Commissioner Kalriess said there is some work in progress regarding this.

Commissioner Jones asked about glide path, etc. for approach to the airport and if there were any standards in existence that need to be followed? Mr. Douglas said there are some FAA standards. Chairman Vaughan suggested that the Airport Commission also be asked for input regarding this. Mr. Jones is afraid that the vitality of the airport might be lost if too many houses are put near it. Chairman Vaughan stated that the first meeting in October will provide an opportunity to discuss the zoning map. Perhaps information can be provided regarding development around the airport at that meeting.

Chairman Vaughan asked David Fuller that now that they have received these chapters, how will the rest of the town plan process unfold? Since this review was essentially a page by page review, how will the rest of it be presented to the Commission for this type of review. Will this allow things to remain on schedule? Mr. Fuller responded that this depends on how meetings will be scheduled for review of the plan chapters. The scenario stage will require more public input, he sees the drafts moving along quickly. Mr. Vaughan then asked the Commission how they would like to proceed with review of the plan.

Commissioner Jones has confidence in the ability of the staff, but is disappointed that there is so much comparison to the 1997 town plan. He would like to see the plan written and submitted for approval. He feels the current process is delaying the final product.

Commissioner Kalriess is concerned that the people involved in the visioning sessions are members of boards and commissions. He would have liked to have seen more citizen involvement. He thinks the plan should be written by staff and the commission should seek citizen input.

Commissioner Hoovler felt there were goals and objectives that need Commission and Council consideration. This is not just a staff document, it is also that of other Commissions. He feels that staff needs their input to properly move forward.

Commissioner Bangert asked about the joint EAC, EAC and PC meeting on October 20th. Will this meeting be going over the entire four chapters again? Mr. Fuller replied, essentially yes, the other Commissions have received the chapters relating to them, but have been presented only the chapters pertinent to their commissions. Commissioner Vaughan said they should have been in attendance at this meeting then. Commissioner Bangert said if the goal is to discuss what they just did, it should be done together and passed. She prefers to see the draft on the 20th and let them put some input in.

Chairman Vaughan would like to see the draft of the next three chapters on the 20th of October and the rewrite of these chapters. Mr. Fuller replied that the next three chapters cannot be prepared by the 20th. Chairman Vaughan asked if staff felt their input this evening was sufficient to write these chapters? Mr. Fuller replied at the next meeting maybe things for discussion would be limited to those where more clarification is needed.

Commissioner Jones asked what scenarios are? Mr. Fuller said that four different land use examples would be given. Each one would be described including all demographics and fiscal impacts of each.

Commissioner Hoovler asked for the schedule so that the Commission is aware of what is left to do and is there any way to streamline the process? He would like the timeline as part of the next agenda.

Commissioner Barnes said he also does not want to readdress the same issues. He asked that the other Commissions input be obtained and then everything be provided to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Wright said the joint meeting should figure out the hot buttons. The other commissions should have all of the information and then call for a joint meeting. Let staff sort out the most vital points and then discuss only those. This would avoid the rehashing of each chapter.

Chairman Vaughan asked how these scenarios would be presented to the public. Will they be like visioning sessions? Mr. Fuller responded that it would be an open house that would extend over several days, nights and into a weekend. There would be photographs, drawings, etc. on proposed land uses. The information would include economic impact, transportation, environmental, etc. of the proposals.

Commissioner Kalriess commented that his concern is that under the current schedule, a large block of the properties will be invested and gone prior to the adoption of the town plan. His other concern is that is important to see how land is used, however, the person that develops it may not want to develop it in the way that is being recommended.

Commissioner Jones said that a revisioning process is not necessary, through public hearings this will be addressed. Mr. Fuller said that public hearing is not a good way to get public input. It can bring out the worst in people who may feel at that point they have been left out of the process.

One of the critical points of keeping the draft town plan on schedule is getting the transportation information. Currently the county is winding up a study that will provide key information.

Bruce Douglas came forward to point out that the future discussion will basically be a recap of the goals and objectives, not each page of the documents.

Commissioner Wright said they can concentrate on those items that all had some issues with and not discuss those that all agreed on.

Commissioner Bangert asked if the other commissions had seen their respective chapters and if they had provided input. They had both seen all the chapters, however, have not

actually discussed them. She is concerned that if they are told to use only the last few pages, they might resent not being able to have total input.

Commissioner Hoovler said if they are aware of the agenda ahead of time and have been given ample lead time to comment, there should not be a problem.

Chairman Vaughan asked when the next few chapters will be ready. Mr. Fuller responded on November 18, there will be another meeting such as tonight's.

Commissioner Kalriess asked if it was a matter of when the Planning Commission met or a matter of staff gathering data that is prolonging this process. Chairman Vaughan said everytime they involve a staff member in special meetings, they are pulling that staff member away from work. They must be careful in the utilization of staff.

David Fuller said the October 20th meeting could also have the recap of the 60/40 input as part of the agenda

Commissioner Jones asked how many outstanding chapters there were and whether they are currently being worked on. Mr. Fuller responded that information is being gathered, but actual writing has not yet begun.

COUNCIL AND REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

None

STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Kalriess stated that he had met with the Loudoun Times Mirror site.

Commissioner Hoovler said that the KSI representatives presented a report at the Economic Development Commission regarding Leesburg Village. Chairman Vaughan said that KSI representatives are scheduled to give a presentation at the first Planning Commission meeting in October. Mr. Hoovler asked whether staff comments had been sent out yet and asked that Planning Commission also get the staff comments.

Commissioner Jones asked what happened to the meeting he asked for regarding the JLMA. Chairman Vaughan said that it would be at the next Planning Commission meeting. He said that with all of the things they will be involved in, adding extra

meetings is not a good idea. Mr. Jones had some concern about the discussion being packaged into a regular meeting.

Commissioner Kalriess asked whether they could stay in front of the curve of future developments. Is there a way that we can consider what is in the old comp plan to assure that the new comp plan is considered with some of the developable land.

Commissioner Wright said there were two concerns, one on the JLMA and inviting the town attorney to be in attendance, and second the concern of identifying large parcels that may be hot spots.

Commissioner Jones asked if they could meet downstairs during a regular meeting. Chairman Vaughan said there was nothing on the agenda for the October 7th meeting, and that is why they scheduled the discussion on these items at that time.

Commissioner Kalriess said that he did not want to set aside looking at large parcels because he is aware of several applications that are going to come in. He would like the Commission to be able to be prepared.

ADJOURNMENT

The motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 11:30pm.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Linda DeFranco, Commission Clerk

Clifton Vaughan, Chairman